

Report of the Denominational (Canon 806 & Section 48)
Inspection of
(Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

***St Laurence Catholic Primary School
Arbury Road, Cambridge, CB4 2JX***

DfE No: 873 3366
URN: 147384

For Catholic Diocese of East Anglia



Chair of Governors: Charlotte Woodford

Executive Headteacher: Clare Clark
Head of School: Veronica Harvey

Denominational Inspector: Mrs Margaret Stewart

Dates of Inspection: 4th July 2022

Date and grade of previous inspection: March 2014. Grade 1

DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL

St. Laurence Catholic primary school is situated on the Arbury estate in Cambridge for pupils aged 5 to 11. There are 269 pupils on roll of which 54% are Catholic and 26% are from other Christian denominations. 25 pupils are from other World Faiths. 22% of pupils are supported by Pupil Premium (PP) funding and 29% of pupils are in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM). 20% of pupils are identified as having Special Educational Needs and/or a Disability (SEND), 10 of which are supported by an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP). 54% of teaching staff are Catholic, two of which hold a specialist Catholic Teacher's Certificate (CCRS) with others pending. St. Laurence school belongs to Our Lady of Walsingham Catholic Multi Academy Trust (CMAT) and is led by an executive headteacher, head of school and an assistant headteacher.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL AS A CATHOLIC SCHOOL.

Grade 1

St. Laurence is an outstanding Catholic primary school. The Catholic life and mission of the school is upheld and lived out by all members of the community. It is a place where everyone feels cherished as part of a family and feels valued for who they are and the different gifts and talents they possess. Pupils have an important part to play in shaping the Catholic character of the school and thrive on taking responsibility for the many opportunities provided for their personal, spiritual and moral development. Staff, parents' and pupils' voices are actively sought and considered allowing them to witness the impact of their views and ideas in changing and contributing to the Catholic character of the school. The school has a welcoming and inclusive environment; displays in all parts of the school reflect and celebrate the Catholic ethos, Gospel values and Catholic Social Teaching (CST). The Catholic traditions are deeply valued and joyfully celebrated with a deep respect for others from other faith and cultural traditions. A focus on saints from other countries allow pupils to make links to their own cultural heritage. Achieving the Silver Religious Education Quality Mark (REQM) testifies to the depth of commitment to the quality and breadth of religious education and ensures its inclusivity for all.

Governors and leaders are highly ambitious in shaping and improving standards and outcomes for all and the vision 'Christ at the centre, child at the heart' reaches out beyond the school gates. Pupils see themselves as ambassadors of St. Laurence school and this is evident in their strong parish links, their passionate fundraising endeavours and in the way they present themselves at diocesan events. There is a strong vision that pupils will take what they have experienced at St. Laurence and continue to be active in promoting the common good in the future.

Covid Response

The commitment to the wellbeing of pupils, their families and the adults in school during the pandemic was exemplary and it continues to be a time that everyone reflects on with great pride. The senior leadership team, alongside the teachers, were committed to making the provision for RE and Collective Worship the utmost priority. As part of the remote learning offer, bespoke RE lessons, assemblies, reflections and liturgies were uploaded and available for all children. For those who were unable to access online provision, resources with support were provided by the school, including technical guidance from the office staff. Pastoral care for families during this time was outstanding. Senior leaders and staff stayed in regular contact with all children and for some families who needed extra care, this was done more regularly.

What the school needs to do to improve further.

- Develop the work of the Synod, linking it to the strengths of the REQM Award, leading to pupils being voices of change within the Church.
- Continue to embed a systematic way for pupils to evaluate the school's Catholic Life and Collective Worship and take a lead in planning future developmental priorities
- For pupils to deepen their independence in learning, become more reflective learners and explore enquiry skills in RE including by asking 'big' questions that are important to them.
- To continue to deepen networking links within the CMAT to support improvements in teaching and learning in RE and prayer and liturgy.
- To develop, resource and implement the new RECD alongside colleagues in the CMAT and ensure appropriate continuing professional development (CPD) is provided to promote full understanding of the principles of the curriculum

CATHOLIC LIFE:

Grade 1

The extent to which pupils benefit from and contribute to the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The school mission statement 'Through God's grace, a community growing in love and understanding' is lived out in the way positive and nurturing relationships are promoted and in the way dedication to the Catholic life and mission is upheld by everyone. The behaviour of pupils is almost always exemplary both in and around school demonstrating great respect for themselves and others. Pupils embrace many opportunities to develop leadership skills in RE. Commitment to the Mini Vinnie groups, School Council, and Eco Club, enables pupils to widen and deepen their understanding of Catholic Social Teaching and of how they can use their skills in the service of others.

The move towards a Restorative Approach behaviour policy has significantly impacted on teacher practice and pupils becoming increasingly reflective in their actions, attitudes and words. This is underpinned by the teaching of the Gospels to 'Love one another, as I have loved you'. One key stage 2 pupil said, "At St. Laurence's the teachers understand you, they protect you and your family". Pupils are reminded to show 'Care, Courtesy and Concern' for everyone they meet on a daily basis. From the youngest years, pupils have an enthusiastic commitment to addressing injustice and fairness wherever it is witnessed including in caring for our common home, inspired by work around Pope Francis' Encyclical Laudato Si. They have a wealth of opportunities to employ their enterprising ideas and talents to plan and organise many events for their chosen charities ranging from CAFOD to a local homeless shelter, 'Jimmy's Night Shelter'. The role of the Mini Vinnie groups is truly embedded within the life of the school, they are proactive in working alongside parish groups to raise funds for those who are in need, and they are instrumental in building the prayer life of the school.

The staff are highly committed to promoting the Catholic character of the school. They demonstrate a clear understanding of its mission in the way they plan for learning in RE, facilitate and lead engaging collective worship and commit to and seek high quality CPD in all areas. The availability of pastoral care for both staff and pupils are outstanding. Leaders ensure that wellbeing is continuously reviewed and prioritised, impacting on the nurturing ethos evident in school ensuring everyone feels highly valued and cared for.

Catholic life is rigorously monitored and evaluated by governors and leaders and there are systematic processes in place and evidenced to ensure that improvements are identified and implemented within clear time scales. As part of the evaluation process, pupil and staff views are highly regarded and form the basis for many areas of change and improvement.

Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) is taught in an age-appropriate way so that pupils develop a good understanding of loving relationships in a Catholic context, using resources 'Journey in Love' and 'Ten Ten'. There are clear links with Personal, Social, Health Education (PSHE) and RE which strengthens the curriculum further. The RSE curriculum is carefully adapted and evaluated to support the needs of each year group and parents communicate their appreciation of being fully consulted and informed.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:

Grade 1

Pupils, including many of those with SEND make very good and often outstanding progress from their starting points with nearly all year groups attaining well in RE. Progress over time is clearly captured in pupils' workbooks which are consistently well presented, showing a range of learning strategies and recording methods. Marking and feedback follows the agreed policy and where questioning is used well, pupils respond to demonstrate deeper thinking and to make links with their own experiences. Key stage 2 pupils agreed they would welcome more opportunities to ask challenging questions themselves. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about learning about other faiths and one key stage 2 pupil said, "You can understand people's point of view and the way they live their lives better", and another said, "When we pray there are lots of things that are similar".

The quality of teaching and learning in nearly all classes engages and challenges almost all learners. In some observed lessons, learning was specifically differentiated, for example, one younger pupil with significant communication needs was expertly supported by an experienced adult and an interactive activity. Pupils from the youngest age were observed being able to build effectively on previous learning by answering a range of carefully planned questions, employ reasoning, use specific religious vocabulary and make personal links to the theme being taught. The creative use of floor prayer books captures the thoughtful responses of pupils inspired by the themes, Gospel values and relevant everyday events. The comments provide insight into the spiritual development of pupils. Assessment by teachers is focussed and robust. Use of the diocesan 'I Can' Statements, evident in pupils' books, and a shared understanding of the New Standards in RE ensures that assessment is of a consistent quality. Moderation with other schools within the CMAT has further endorsed judgements in pupils' learning.

Leadership in RE is highly effective and there is a clear vision and expectation for excellence in RE. Teachers are deeply committed to developing their own subject knowledge and expertise within the subject and leaders and governors are passionate about providing quality CPD and training opportunities in identified areas for improvement. Facilitating shared planning sessions ensure pupils within each key stage receive lessons that are of a consistently high quality and that professional dialogue around standards, spirituality and theology and Catholic Social Teaching is actively explored. Leaders and governors work effectively together to systematically monitor and evaluate outcomes in RE and the findings are prioritised on school and RE action plans to secure improvement and identify CPD needs. The new tracking system INSIGHT will align assessments with other subject areas and give a more comprehensive analyses of outcomes in RE for teachers and leaders.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP:

Grade 1

It is clearly evident that prayer and liturgy is central to the life of the school. The whole school community highly values and participates in a wide variety of collective acts of worship that are carefully planned to reflect the liturgical year, sacramental life and Gospel values. Pupils are adept and enthusiastic about planning and leading reflections and liturgy, and this is strongly embedded in the school. During an observation, key stage 2 pupils confidently presented a thought-provoking reflection on the value of 'Respect' in which they role played a story about how others with a disability are sometimes treated. Other pupils were reverent and thoughtful in their participation and were challenged to think about their own responses. During Advent and Lent, pupils are fully involved in planning and leading 'Stay and Pray' sessions in their classes to which families are invited. Pupils can articulate their understanding of the liturgical year and the celebrations and feasts that are important to them in school. They are familiar with the sacraments and their significance for members of the Catholic faith as 'special times with Jesus in your life'. Prayer is highly valued by pupils as a way of becoming closer to God. A key stage 2 pupil spoke passionately about when you pray you can " Tell God about whatever is troubling you, whatever ladens you down and he will listen. Then you can get on with life". Another added "Sometimes you don't even need to use words", demonstrating a clear understanding of the variety and purpose of prayer.

There is a wealth of collective worship opportunities provided by the school and it is at the heart of the daily life, feasts and celebrations throughout the year. Collective worship is varied and vibrant, it includes the use of song, music, roleplay and signing to allow it to be accessible and engaging for all pupils. Key staff are excellent role models in delivering high quality collective worship and indeed teachers new to the school are supported to deliver assemblies and reflections. Prayer and liturgy are prioritised for discussion and evaluation on an informal basis and during staff meetings. Staff are committed to identifying good practice and agreeing points for improvement. The prayer areas within each classroom reflect the RE themes, rich vocabulary and opportunities for pupils to engage in spiritual reflection using prayer stones to aid contemplation. Most prayer tables displayed pupils work and contributions to make them a more meaningful space. There is a beautiful prayer space set in the grounds called 'Kate's Cabin', dedicated to the cherished memory of a much-respected teacher and here groups have reflections and quiet time for contemplation.

Leaders and governors have a deep understanding of the importance of collective worship in the life of the school and are passionate about ensuring that it is of the highest quality through highly focussed monitoring and evaluation. Leaders benefit from the support of the dedicated parish priest who plays a visible and active role in the sacramental and spiritual development of the pupils. Collective worship is expertly led and resourced to a high standard including the promotion of inspiring CPD focussing on, for example, 'Spirituality' and CCRS, (Margaret Beaufort Institute) 'Pupil Led Worship' (IGNITE) Catholic Social Teaching (CAFOD) and this has a significant impact on the expertise of teachers and outcomes for pupils.

EAST ANGLIA DIOCESAN SCHOOLS' SERVICE

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Letter to pupils explaining the findings from the Diocesan Inspection

Dear Pupils

10th July 2022

Diocesan Inspection of St. Laurence Catholic Primary School

Thank you very much for making me feel so welcome on my visit to your school last week. I enjoyed watching you work really hard in all your RE lessons and looking at the wonderful work in your books. I was very impressed by your excellent behaviour and friendships with each other which help to make your school a very special place to learn.

Here are some of the things I especially liked:

- You have lots of opportunities to make a great difference to other peoples' lives through your work with charities
- Your school is a strong part of your parish, and you support each other very well.
- Your teachers care deeply about your personal and spiritual development. They make sure that you are happy and are ambitious for you and your learning.
- You are skilled and enthusiastic leaders in Collective Worship and make prayer and liturgy a special, reflective time for everyone.

I have asked your teachers to consider developing ways for you to become involved in making positive changes to the Church in the future based on the good news of the Gospels. You already plan and lead prayer and liturgy very well so now your teachers feel you are ready to reflect on these sessions and give your views about how they could be developed. When you are working in RE, I would like you to reflect on what you have done well and decide on what you could do to improve your work. Some of you have said that you would like to ask important questions of your own in RE. Soon there will be a new RE curriculum and your teachers will work very hard to make it exciting and challenging for you all. I have asked your teachers to think about how they can do this and share their good ideas with other schools.

Thank you again for a special day at St. Laurence, I enjoyed my time with you.

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Stewart
Diocesan Inspector